

# Latvia

## Lettish Life in Legendary & Modern Times

By Florence Farmborough

Special Correspondent of "The Times"

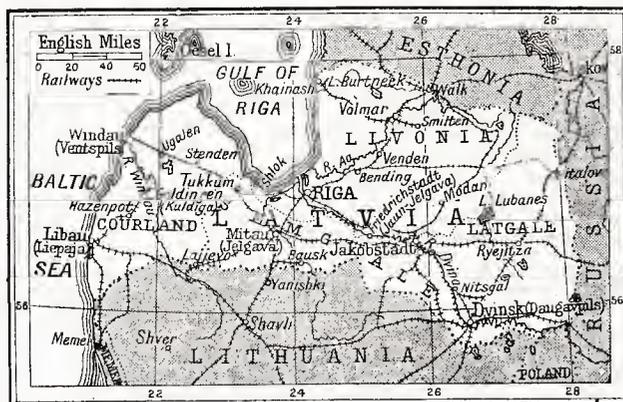
CONSEQUENT on the Great War, numerous changes impressed themselves on the countries and civilizations of Europe—in particular, alterations of government, as well as of boundaries. From beneath the wreckage of overthrown States new ones have sprung into being; old wrongs have been righted, and ancient peoples have found themselves re-established within their own national borders.

Among the States born to the thunder of cannon are the Baltic States, which formerly lay within Russian territory and now hold a specially significant position in modern Europe. One of these newly-founded sovereign States, bordering on the Baltic Sea, is Latvia, the country of the Letts. The Letts, with their neighbours, the Lithuanians, on the south, belong to a branch of the Indo-European parent people, from which all peoples of the white race, except perhaps the Semites, trace their origin, and appear to be entirely distinct from the Slavonic and Germanic branches. It is claimed for them that they have inhabited these lands for no fewer than five thousand years, and their legendary history would certainly cover that period of time.

Such history must, of course, be regarded as more or less conjectural; and we are on firmer ground when we take account of the testimony given by Greek and Roman writers, such as Ptolemy, Herodotus, Tacitus, and Pliny, all of whom have something to say respecting the manners and occupations of the Baltic

tribes. These records at the least put it beyond doubt that the Letts, together with the Lithuanians and the ancient Prussians, inhabited the Baltic regions in remote antiquity.

In Lettish folklore, Latvia has frequently been designated the "Amber Land," and it is not unlikely that the ancient Letts were first to discover the amber deposits on the Baltic seaboard. It was with ancient Latvia, three thousand years ago, that the Phoenician merchants, always on the look-out for opportunities by which to promote the commercial interests of their country, carried on a profitable trade in amber. Roman and Greek coins, the latter from the time of Alexander the Great, have been found in Latvia in considerable numbers; while amber ornaments of the reddish variety of succinite, met with in abundance in Courland, have been discovered in the Mycenaean tombs; in which tombs there were also found specimens of dainty golden ornaments similar to those unearthed from Latvian mounds. These excavations of fairly recent years substantiate the early intercourse between Latvia and southern



THE BALTIC STATE OF LATVIA



## SURVIVAL OF ANCIENT LATVIAN REGALIA

The imposing coronet-shaped headdress and richly-embossed breast buckles figured conspicuously in the full traditional attire of the Letts, and this handsome costume may still be seen in the village of Virga on special festive occasions

*Photo, J. Sīhlis and Arnold Zahlt, Riga*

Europe, and the remarkable find of an amber ornament in the cliff-tomb of Tutankhamen, at Luxor, would prove that so far back as 1358 B.C. Baltic amber was known to the ancient Egyptian world.

The old Prussian or Borussian idiom became extinct in the seventeenth century, but the language of the Letts and Lithuanians is even now not unlike that spoken thousands of years ago by their ancestors of the original Aryan

stock. Such differences as exist to-day, whether in language or custom, are mainly the outcome of varied historical fortunes and differences of belief—the Lithuanians being still Roman Catholics, whereas the Letts, under Teutonic dominion, threw in their lot early with the Reformation. But it is noticeable that both nations have retained many of the pagan superstitions that were blended with their earliest Christianity, and an elaborate nature-worship is reflected in the folklore still prevailing among the peasantry.

Returning, however, to the Letto-Lithuanian languages; it should be noted that not many years ago they were classified by the Germans as belonging to the Teutonic group, and by the Russians at the same time as belonging to the Slavonic group; but scholars with deeper knowledge and insight, unbiased, too, by imperialistic designs, came to another conclusion, and established beyond doubt that the Letto-

Lithuanian languages belong to a totally distinct family.

Little of the ethnographic material supplied by Greek and Roman writers can be relied upon as actual history; and the historical facts proper, gleaned as they are from diversified sources, provide no connected narrative, but furnish us rather with fitful happenings, chiefly those relating to warfare, of the Cours (Kurs) and Livs, as the people of Courland and Livonia respectively were

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known in those early days. They testify, however, with indisputable clearness, that before the twelfth century the Lettish kings (Virsaishi) had fought successfully various Gothic and Scandinavian tribes, and that the two chief claimants to Latvian territory, the Germans and the Russians, had not at that time even made their appearance.

But towards the end of the twelfth century Latvia was invaded by German "Kultur" in the form of the Teutonic Crusaders, who impersonated at once German militarism, commerce, and religion. For some time these Knights of the Sword had been actively engaged in Jerusalem; but when Abbot Berthold procured a Pope's Bull to sanction a crusade for the Christianising of the Letts, the Teutonic members of the Order of the Sword (forced by this time to withdraw from the Holy Land) were only too pleased to transfer their activities to Latvia. Despite the

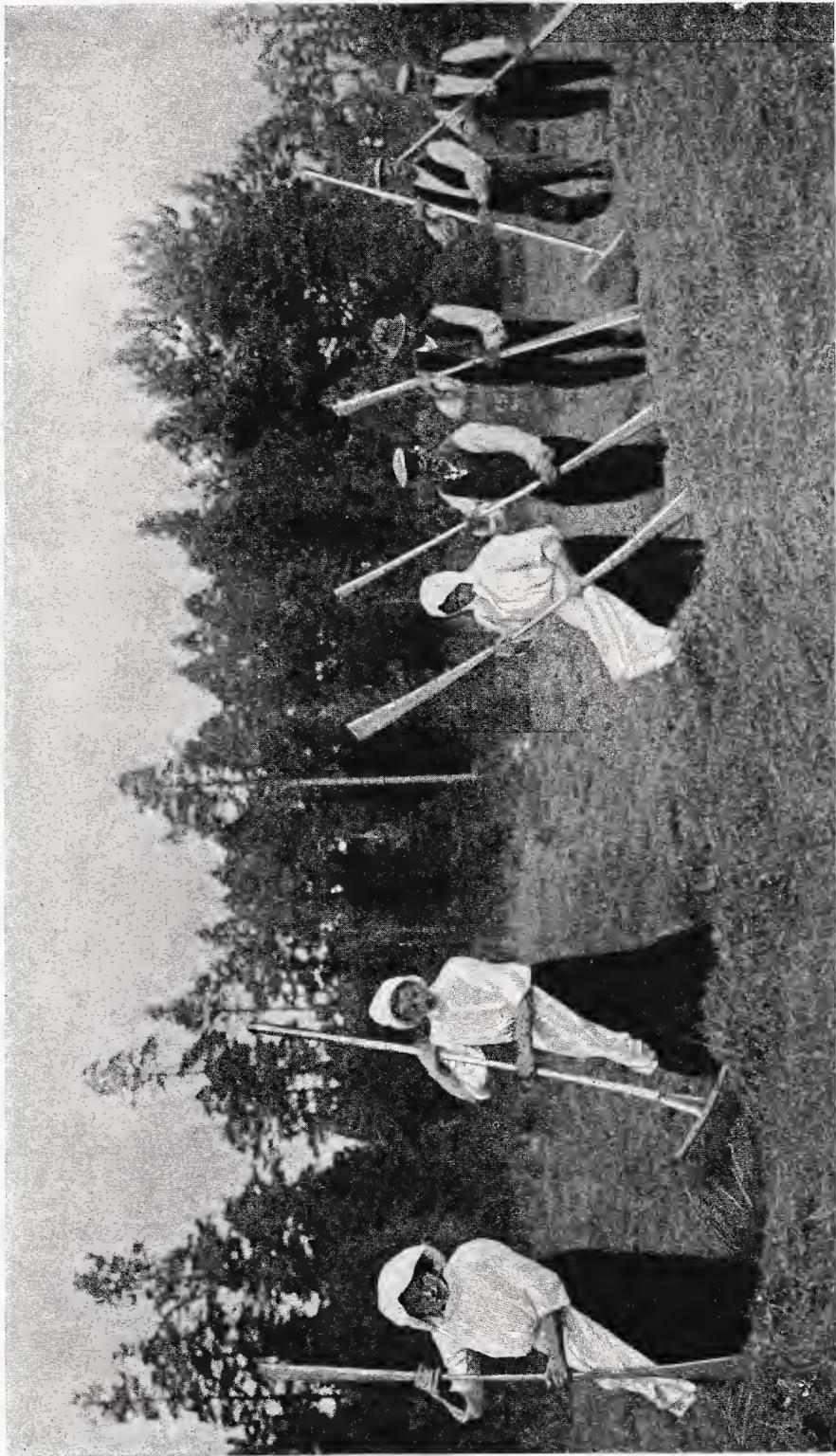
superior military power and science thus brought to bear upon the country, Latvia, though conquered, was never wholly subdued until, in the eighteenth century, Germany and Russia united forces. Then, in consequence of German cunning and Muscovite brutality, Latvia sank practically into oblivion. What little there is of her history since that time may be summed up as one of intense and bitter racial antagonism towards her powerful oppressors.

From the outset of the Great War the Letts sided with the Allies. They fought at first in the Russian army, but later in their own volunteer corps. Out of the young manhood of the country 80,000 found a grave on the battlefield—that is to say, 30 per cent. of all the Letts mobilised. And 40 per cent. of the population forsook their homes, some under compulsion, but the greater part voluntarily, preferring the life of the refuge to that which would have been



ATTRACTIVE APPAREL OF OLD-FASHIONED LATVIA

In the small hamlet of Nice, situated on the coast some few miles from Liepaja (Libau), delightful costumes are still in existence among the peasantry, whose loyalty to old tradition is manifested in innumerable ways. Several varieties of the coronet-shaped headdress prevail in the Liepaja district, where Lettish national costumes seem to have survived more than in any other part of Latvia



**LAND WHICH AFTER PILLAGE AND PLUNDER IS ONCE AGAIN YIELDING ITS OLD-TIME RECORD CROPS**

The reconstruction of war-devastated areas in Latvia is occupying many hands and minds. Whole stretches of land laid waste by the scorching breath of the cannon have been carefully tended and cultivated afresh. The agrarian laws introduced by the new Republic have started many Lettish farmers on a fair footing, and the Government, realizing that agriculture is of paramount importance in the economic prosperity of the country, is giving them every possible assistance.

The curious hat-humors of the country are...

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their lot under German domination. The Germans, as all the world knows, were beaten; their dream of "Dominium Maris Baltici" was never realized, and the Baltic Sea did not become a "German Lake." The Armistice brought about a cessation of strife for the Allies, but there was no respite for the Letts. An invasion of Latvia was initiated by the Bolsheviks, in justification of which one of their official newspapers declared: "Lithuania, Latvia, and Esthonia lie across the route to Western Europe and constrict our revolution. The wall between the revolutionists of Russia and Germany must be torn down. . . ."

### Freedom after Seven Hundred Years

The service that these border States have rendered the world in stemming the tide of Bolshevism can hardly be emphasised too strongly. Onslaught after onslaught of the Bolsheviks had to be met and countered, while in the rear German intrigues were afoot. The Prussians, too, received material and moral support in their aggression from the landowning nobility, the descendants of the German military adventurers who had invaded the country in the twelfth century, whose one ambition was to retain the land which they were still holding—no less than half Latvia—and which they were aware the Letts, if victorious, would ultimately require at their hands.

By depleting at great risk their eastern front, the Letts turned against the enemy force in the rear, and after a desperate struggle, lasting nearly three months, succeeded in driving the Prussians over the frontier (Dec. 1919). The victorious army at once turned its attention to the Bolsheviks, but not for some seven weary weeks of further fighting were the last shattered Russian regiments expelled from Latvian territory. Then, for the first time in seven hundred years, since they lost their ancient sovereignty to the Teutonic Crusaders, did the Lettish people breathe the air of freedom.

In Western Europe very little is known of the ravages wrought in Latvia either by the Great War or by the Russo-German invasions subsequent to the Armistice. It is estimated that quite 60 per cent. of Latvian industry was destroyed. In 1914 there were 100,000 industrial workers employed in Riga alone, whereas in 1921 the number for the whole of Latvia was less than 2,500.

### Heavy Price of Liberty

Agricultural interests appear to have suffered the heaviest of all. Rural districts were cut up by dug-outs and covered with wire entanglements, while the number of farmhouses destroyed ran into many thousands. In the whole of the country 1,347,000 acres of arable land (about one half of the total area under cultivation before the Great War) were left fallow.

Latvia, in comparison with the prosperous country of pre-war days became a desert. This has in truth to be admitted, in spite of the countless brave efforts that have been made, not unsuccessfully, at reconstruction. But Liberty must ever be bought at tremendous cost, and Latvia has paid full price. She has no regrets for her sacrifices, and in the words of one of her own stout-hearted sons, "has gladly suffered the exigencies of the war, for they were the price of her newly-won independence—and if need be she will suffer more." And as one travels through the country, the numerous derelict houses and waste places call forth a feeling of admiration that despair did not overwhelm the people while fighting their up-hill battle of constructing something out of nothing.

### Constitution of the New Free State

For administrative purposes the country is divided into four districts: Livonia or Livland, Courland, Semeigale, and Latgale. The total area comprises nearly 25,000 square miles, and its population is about 1,813,000 persons. Until the convocation of the Constituent

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Assembly authority was vested in the Latvian National Council, which met for the first time in Nov., 1917; but it was not until Nov., 1918, that Latvia was proclaimed a sovereign Free State, her independence being shortly after recognized by most of the Allied Powers. The Constituent Assembly, meeting in the spring of 1920, consisted of 152 members, elected on a basis of universal suffrage. The regular Parliament consists of 100 members, elected for three years, to whom is entrusted the election of the President of the State.

### Agriculture Latvia's Mainstay

Agriculture is the backbone of the economic resources of Latvia, and about half the population is engaged in it, together with its allied industries. The most important article of commerce is flax—famous as "Livonian Flax"; before the Great War it formed the chief article of export, most of it finding its way to the western countries of Europe. The pre-war acreage of flax fields was about 275,000; owing, however, to the devastations of war and to the fact that 500,000 refugees who left their country were farmers, the acreage dwindled to 70,000.

### Timbered Land of Milk and Honey

The next most important export is timber, a quarter of the country being covered with forests. In consequence of the shortage of coal the railways for a long time had to be fed with wood, and this supply, together with the vast quantities of timber required for local needs—chiefly a demand from the devastated regions—considerably crippled the export of timber.

Even in pre-war days Latvia was often alluded to in foreign journals as the "Denmark of Russia," implying that the productivity of land and dairy-farms, for which Denmark had long been famed, was similarly to be met with in Latvia—at that time one of Russia's most fertile provinces. Live-stock-breeding, bee-keeping, and fishing are other chief occupations; the two

last having been the ancient traditional industries of the Letts. In olden days the Letts even paid their taxes in honey, and it was so plentiful that an alcoholic beverage (*medus vihns*) was concocted from it which was prized as a most exquisite wine. Bee-keeping is still a prosperous branch of rural industry, but it no longer forms one of the chief sources of income as it did in 1913, when there were 12,000 apiaries in Courland.

When the ravages wrought by war have been mended and peace and plenty have again joined hands, Latvia should see the traditions of her past prosperity realized anew, and prove a veritable Canaan, flowing with milk and honey. Other industries have to do with metal, chemical, and textile enterprise, all of which are well developed, in particular the metal industry, which easily heads the list, although there are neither iron nor coal mines in the country.

### Advantageous Geographical Conditions

Riga, the richest and most important of the capitals of the young Baltic States, is situated at the mouth of the Daugava (*Dvina*), a convenient commercial waterway rising in the highlands of Central Russia, and contains many stately medieval mementoes, among which the Old Cathedral, built in 1204, three years after the founding of the town by Bishop Albert I., is one of the most notable. Beautifully kept public parks and fine boulevards are characteristics of the up-to-date "new town" that surrounds the "old city," of which the narrow streets, quaint old Guild Houses and Hanseatic Halls form a striking contrast with the modern features of new Riga.

Latvia has about 340 miles of sea coast, and good river and railway communications. Her three most important harbours are Riga, Liepaja (*Libau*), and Ventspils (*Windau*), the two last mentioned being practically ice-free the whole year round. Riga is closed to navigation generally for a few days only. Before the war these

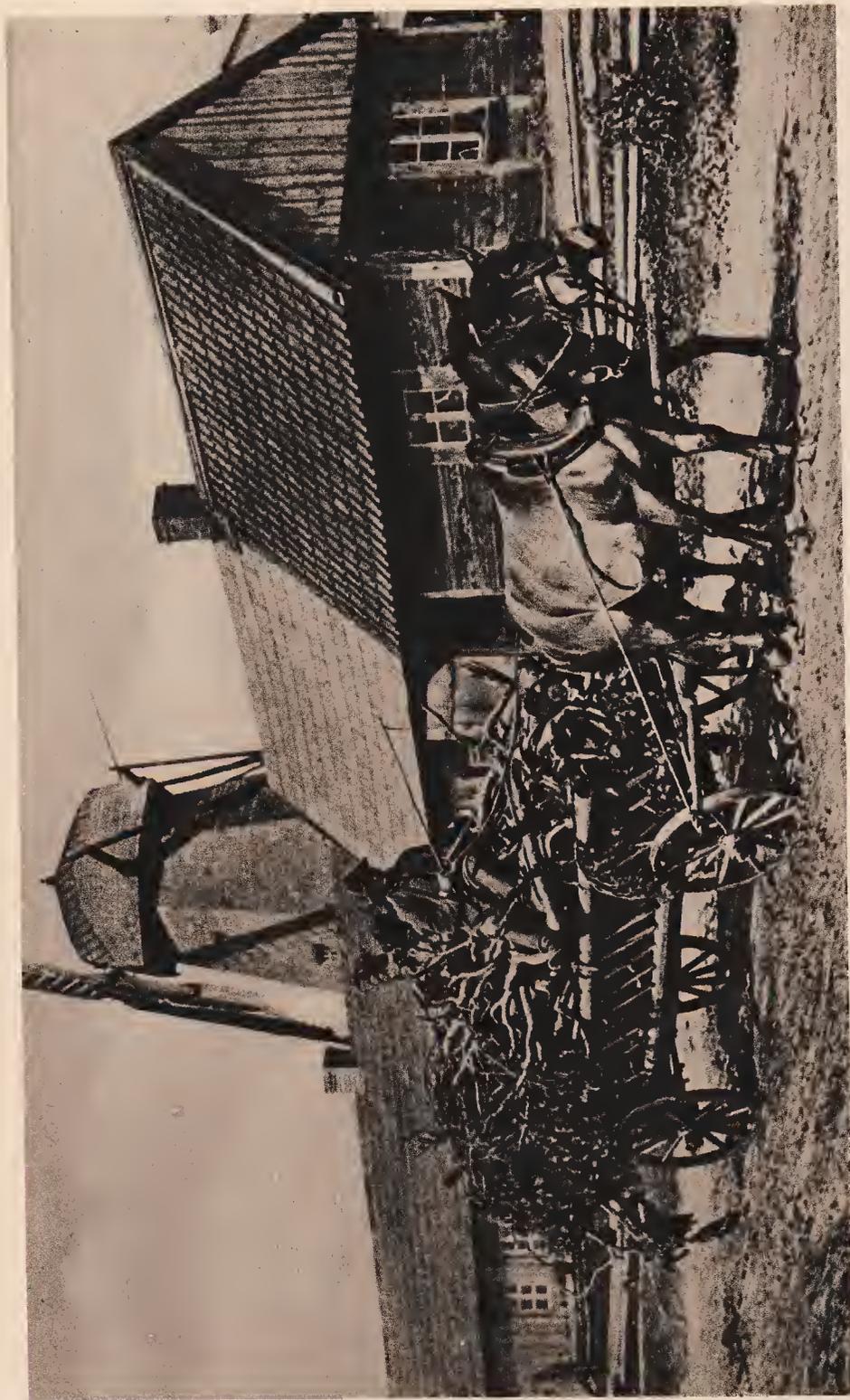
# IN LIBERATED LATVIA:

*At Home with the Letts*



*The national dress of Latvia is entirely unpretentious, but its neat simplicity is singularly attractive on this charming Lettish girl*

Photos on pages 3273 to 3279, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga



*In the well-timbered land of Latvia most of the rural buildings are erected with material supplied by local coniferous and deciduous forests; the residue of the fallen trees feeds the stoves in country cottages*



*A sense of peace pervades the cobbled thoroughfares of Ludze, a small provincial Latvian town, where the tradesfolk carry on business in leisurely fashion devoid of the emulation that incites to urban activity*



*Almost obsolete now are these beautiful old Lettish costumes from Rucava, so eloquent of the tireless artistic zeal of expert needlewomen*



*No sun is too hot or task too long in the golden days of autumn when ripe fruits of the Latvian earth are harvested by many eager hands*



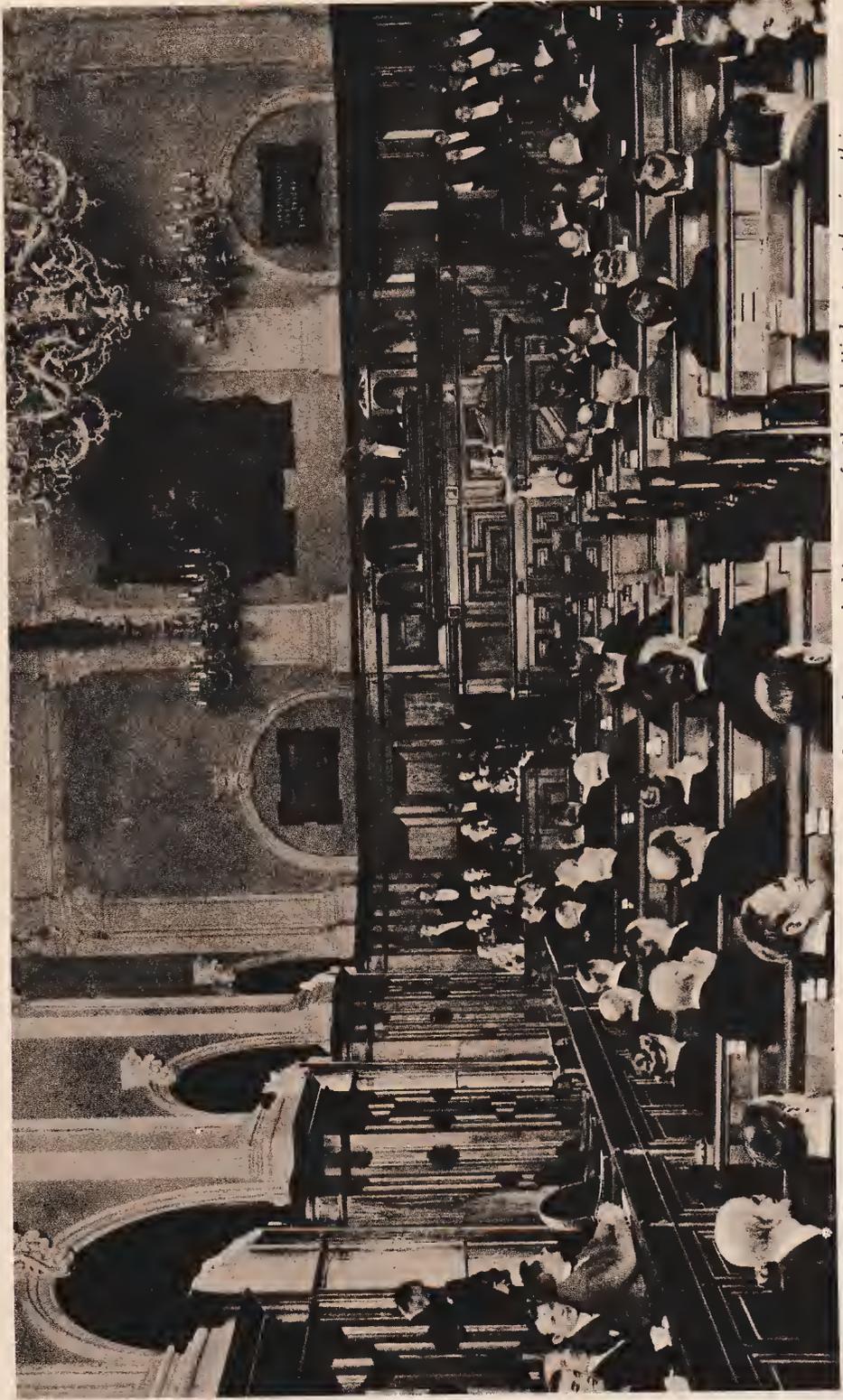
*Hearth and home stand for much in the land of the Letts, and happy smiling faces are not lacking even in the humblest peasant circles*



*Flax cultivation ranks foremost among Latvian agricultural industries, and this Lettish peasant's ambition is centred in his flax crops*



*The prosaic task of potato-peeling wearies her not at all, she sees only the savoury dish her man will enjoy on his return from the fields*



*Full of a weighty significance and unique in the chequered history of the Lettish people is this scene, where under President Tchakste is assembled the first Parliament, or Saeima, of the Free State of Latvia*

Photo, Latvian Consulate General

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harbours played a noteworthy part in the world of commerce and nearly one-fourth of the imports and exports of Russia went by way of Latvia.

The transit trade between Latvia and Russia was reduced to a negligible quantity, but when the latter country shall have regained a footing in European markets, Latvia anticipates a development in her economic position by acting as commercial intermediary between Eastern and Western Europe, her very advantageous geographical position making her the natural and most convenient place of call for countries trading with Russia. Latvia thus performs an economic function of great international importance. In safeguarding her sovereignty and other vital interests, the interests of many other States are likewise ensured.

Brought by a stroke of evil fortune in 1887 under the control of the Russian Ministry of Education, the Lettish schools suffered a blow that well-nigh extinguished the vitality of all Lettish cultured life. The main purpose of the new "Educators" in Latvia was the Russification of the people. All secondary and higher schools conducted in non-Russian languages were closed, and even in the primary schools it was only in the first grades that Lettish was allowed to be taught; whilst all higher grades had to be taught in Russian.

Now, however, the country is well provided with its own primary and secondary schools—attendance being compulsory until the age of sixteen.

Higher education is no less ably conducted than elementary. The University of Tartu (Dorpat) formerly served the three Baltic provinces, but when these acquired their independence, Tartu was naturally recognized as an Esthonian institution, and the Latvian Government lost no time in drawing up plans for a



**HANDSOME TRIO OF THE RUSTIC POPULATION**

The variety of costume worn by this Lettish farmer's wife and daughter is sobriety personified; nevertheless, a touch of colour and originality is displayed respectively in the bright-hued headkerchiefs and the thickening of the legs by several pairs of stockings

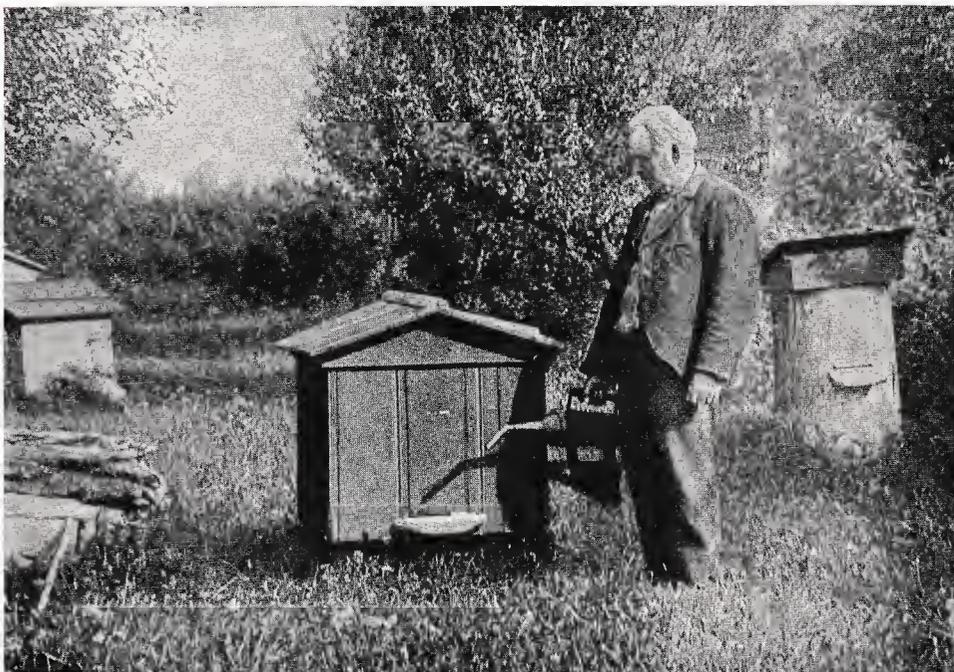
national university of its own. The old Polytechnic Institute of Riga was chosen, its buildings were extended, and in Sept., 1919, the University was formally opened, the initial enrolment totalling 1,258 students, which has increased to over 5,000, including both sexes.

Not very much can be said as yet of Lettish achievements in literature and



#### WELL-EARNED REFRESHMENT AFTER ARDUOUS TOIL

In prehistoric days their ancestors were a warlike people, but, as time passed, the soothing influences of the land tamed their belligerent natures and made of the Letts a peace-loving, agricultural race. Bronzed and weather-stained, true children of the soil, no field labour is too irksome for them, and they share in the common task with the same healthy vigour that they share in the common meal



#### IN THE LAND WHERE HONEY SPELLS MONEY

He is following the traditional calling of his forefathers, whose successful methods of bee-keeping were such as to permit them to depend on their bees for their livelihood, and many of the compulsory contributions levied upon their persons and properties were paid off in honey. There are many thousands of apiaries in Latvia, where bee-keeping is still a prosperous branch of rural industry

*Photos, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga*



#### CHEERY SMILE OF THE MAN WITH THE SCYTHE

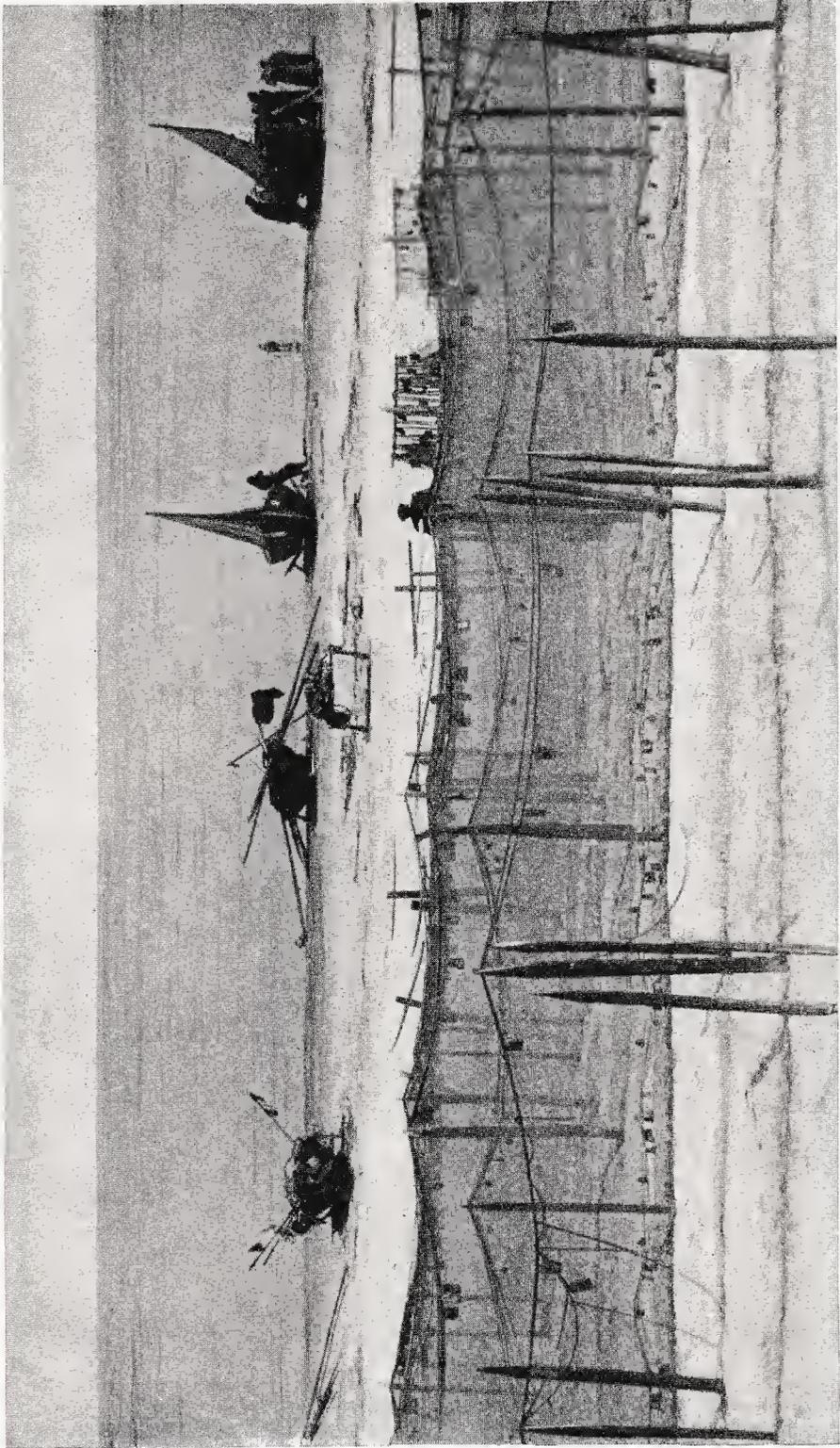
Through the long years he has cherished one ambition—to have a plot of ground which he might call his own. The ambition is now realized; and with light heart the Lettish peasant shoulders his tools and makes for the fields, there to set about his task with a will, content in the knowledge that the reward of his labours will be reaped by his son and his son's son



#### ON THE PREMISES OF A LATVIAN PEASANT PROPRIETOR

In the fine open face of this Lettish farmer something may be read of his life-long struggle with oppression which he countered with all the force of an energetic and vigorous nature. Despite former harsh conditions of life, the Letts' love for their native country has remained unshaken, and their songs are full of endless assurances of affection couched in simple, touching terms

*Photos, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga*



**COAST STATION OF THE MEN THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS AND DO BUSINESS IN GREAT WATERS**  
The majestic stretches of sandy desert along the Latvian coast are full of the romantic charm of the northern seascape. The miniature figures of fisherfolk move here and there about these sandy wastes, tending the nets and boats that help them to wrest their bread from the watery depths. Prior to the Great War, 10,000 Lettish fishermen were employed in the Latvian fisheries. Though their numbers have greatly decreased, there are still many of those for whom the novelties of industrial life have no lure and who to the fishery...

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the fine arts. This may be ascribed to the political and cultural bondage in which the Letts were held for so many years. There are, nevertheless, a few names in the art history of Latvia that stand out in strong relief from among the ordinary talented artistic groups; as, for example, writers such as Blaumans and Rainis, whose dramatic works have set them foremost amongst Lettish playwrights; musicians such as Vitol, Kalnin, and Darsin, whose com-

of Lettish folksongs (*Dainas*) that was published several years ago. No fewer than 200,000 original songs go to make up this literary treasure; all creations of unknown poets of the people, who, having sung these inspired songs that were to reverberate through the ages, went their way, uncrowned and unrecognized, to rest in nameless graves. For ethnographers and philologists of Aryan culture, this collection is a priceless storehouse.



### PRESENT-DAY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ANCIENT BALTS

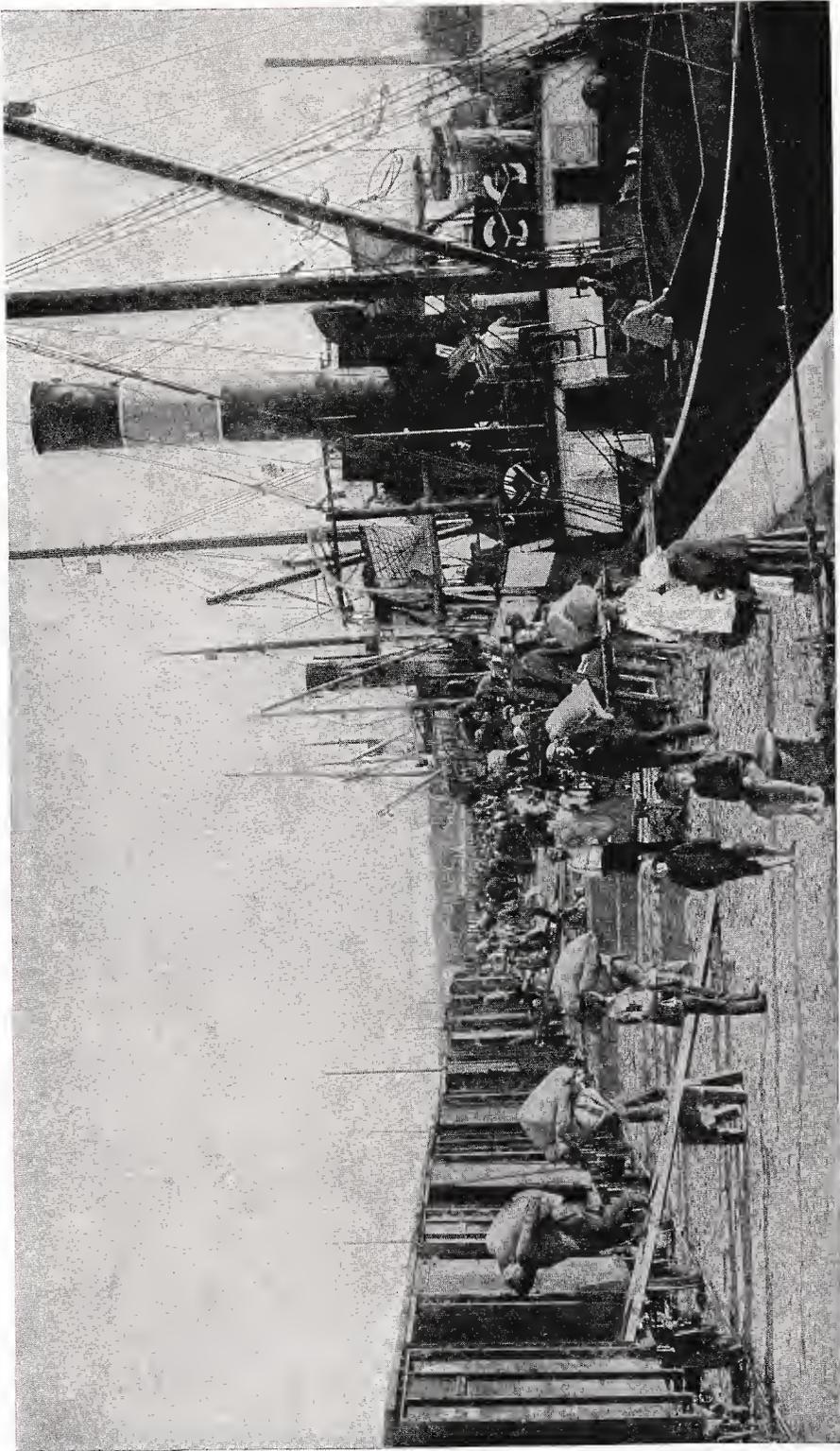
Although a well-developed industry, fishing no longer forms a chief source of revenue in Latvia. The fishermen were some of the greatest sufferers from the Great War. They were forbidden to continue their trade, thousands were banished from the coast, and confined in concentration camps. But they have now returned to the sea and are toilsomely reviving the industry

*Photo, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga*

positions—like those of Edvard Grieg—are rife with the colour and vigour of northern climes; painters such as Rosentals and Purvits, with their infinite variety of portrait and landscape, executed with the master's touch; and Steinberg, whose ceramics of delicate and decorative design are so admired by devotees of the potter's art.

These are names which the judges of the art tribunal of Europe cannot overlook. Here, too, mention should be made of the quite remarkable collection

The Letts are of medium height and sturdily built; they have oval faces, high foreheads, and straight fair hair—a red or black-haired Lett is an uncommon sight. They are agriculturists to the finger-tips, having passed most of their existence in peaceful or forced labour on the land, in which all their interests were centred, as their folklore amply testifies. Indeed, Mother Earth has been their only solace from time immemorial. Two of their proverbs: "One need never be ashamed of



**TRANSHIPPING IMPORTED SALT FROM A MERCHANT VESSEL'S HOLD TO THE RAILWAY VANS ON THE LIEPAJA QUAY**  
Liepāja (Libau), a Latvian seaport, second in importance only to Riga, is situated on a sandy strip of land between the Baltic Sea and Lake Libau. It has an excellent harbour, practically free from ice nearly all the year, export and import trade being, therefore, carried on without interruption. Flax and timber are among the chief exports; food-stuffs, raw materials, and manufactured goods among the imports. Latvia's foreign trade is steadily increasing, and this busy scene is now a characteristic one on the quayside of Liepāja.



**GLIMPSE INTO A DEPARTMENT OF THE PORCELAIN FACTORY IN LATVIA'S CAPITAL TOWN**

Latvia's industries suffered heavily during the Great War. Factories were destroyed, the plant evacuated, and the industrial workers robbed of their livelihood. But unceasing efforts in the work of reconstruction have brought about a general improvement in the Latvian industrial world, and with the resumption of production the whole aspect of the economic life of the country has changed. Before the Great War the large porcelain factory at Riga produced a colossal amount of ware; it is now flourishing anew and before long will undoubtedly attain its pre-war level.

work," and "He who cares for the earth will be nourished by the earth," plainly show the Lettish frame of mind in respect to manual labour.

Temperate, thrifty, and hard-working, are fitting epithets for the Lett. His energy is not apparent on the surface; he has the cold, even temperament of the northerner, and his phlegmatic nature is seldom ruffled. He is not of an exacting disposition; what he has to do he does seriously, conscientiously, never indulging in superfluous words.

#### Lack of Leisure and Luxury

This was the material that the Baltic landowners requisitioned for their vast properties, and they taxed it to the utmost. In the early part of the twentieth century there was an attempt on the part of some German proprietors to attract labourers of other nationalities to their estates. The attempt was a failure; the new landmen demanded new regulations, better food, longer leisure; finally, they were dismissed and Lettish workmen reinstalled.

Although brick houses with tiled roofs are seen in increasing numbers in the country districts, many of the peasants' houses are built of wood, some on a stone foundation, and most of them are thatched. In these poor homesteads the articles of furniture are few and far between, but here and there may be observed remarkable examples of native ingenuity, in quaintly carved wooden chairs, benches, tables, coffers, bowls, dishes, jugs, and mugs; each one of these hand-made, home-made articles testifying to the superior inventive faculties of the Lett, and displaying his natural tendency towards artistic skill.

#### Joyless Life of the Young Children

The old-time costumes of the people have almost disappeared, but in some districts, remote from the influence of the towns, the women may still be seen in the picturesque attire of their great-grandmothers.

In the past the life of Lettish children was never care-free or even touched with gladness. A sullen, heavy climate, and an indescribable poverty seemed to drain from their nature every drop of that joy which is the birthright of childhood. Summer and winter they wore practically the same clothes; their only footgear was in the shape of pastalas, or hide sandals; even the black bread was often scarce on the family table. Only those endowed with a sturdy constitution could endure a life of such privation. Their play period, poor and empty as it was—as may be inferred from the present insignificant number of national games and the remarkable absence of childish toys—lasted for but a brief space; and it was held that when the seventh birthday struck the child should be entrusted with various duties in the fields, chiefly those of guarding the livestock of the simple village neighbours. In Courland alone, according to statistics of a few years past, the number of working children between the age of seven and ten reached nearly 30,000.

#### Lessons Learned from "The Old Nurse"

In the wide pasture meadows, however, they learnt to sing the folksongs of their people, and through the oft-repeated words drank in, slowly but surely, the stoicism and rugged philosophy of their ancestors. Here, face to face with nature, began their "schooling." And here, in this primitive way, there poured in upon them old-world melodies, inspiring legends, poems, proverbs, riddles, and all the manifold treasures from the storehouse of their national folklore.

It thus came to pass, not infrequently, that a passion for music and poetry was instilled into their hearts, affecting and influencing their moral life as no discipline under the baronial superlords of Latvia could ever have done. By fifteen years of age they were supposed to be "grown-up," and were obliged to attend to all manner of manual work at home and in the fields. In recent years



*LATVIA: PEASANT BROIDERERS OF RUCAVA*

Singularly beautiful are some of the homespun cloths and embroideries of the Lettish peasantry, and the skill of the women of Rucava has won for them a far-reaching fame among their compatriots



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life has become broader and more joyous for the children, who are rapidly developing under the influence of present-day schools. They benefit, too, from the improvement that has been going on in the general conditions of peasant life, as well as from the increasing prosperity of the masses of their countrymen.

Thousands of Letts are still scattered over the vast spaces of Russia and Siberia; they have long suffered in silence the privations of exile, but when possible they make attempts to return home, and in recent months a regulated stream of these refugees has been flowing over the Soviet frontier.

The Letts are more tolerant than is generally supposed, but when local Germans or Russians insist on their national or "caste" privileges, enjoyed for centuries while the Letts were in bondage, they can be very vindictive indeed. With an age-long foe, it is not always an easy matter to forget or forgive, and the Letts have just cause for the antagonism that they bear in their hearts, which will take generations to eradicate. The Germans have to recognize the fact that they are in the Republic of Latvia, and not on German or Russian territory; then they and the Letts will harmonise quite well.

Little by little the land is being divided among its original owners, and many a peasant has now become the proprietor of a fair-sized plot of ground; and he will cultivate it with a will, for the ambition of a lifetime has been realized. Those who knew the unfair conditions that once prevailed will realize the significance of a newspaper paragraph, such as the following:—"In the district of X, on Dec. 5, 6, and 7 (1922), the Central Committee for the Distribution of Land divided the X estate, amounting to 14,000 desiastins (2.6 acres = 1 desiastin) among 700 new proprietors."

The German barons find the agrarian laws which have deprived them of much of their property an excuse for

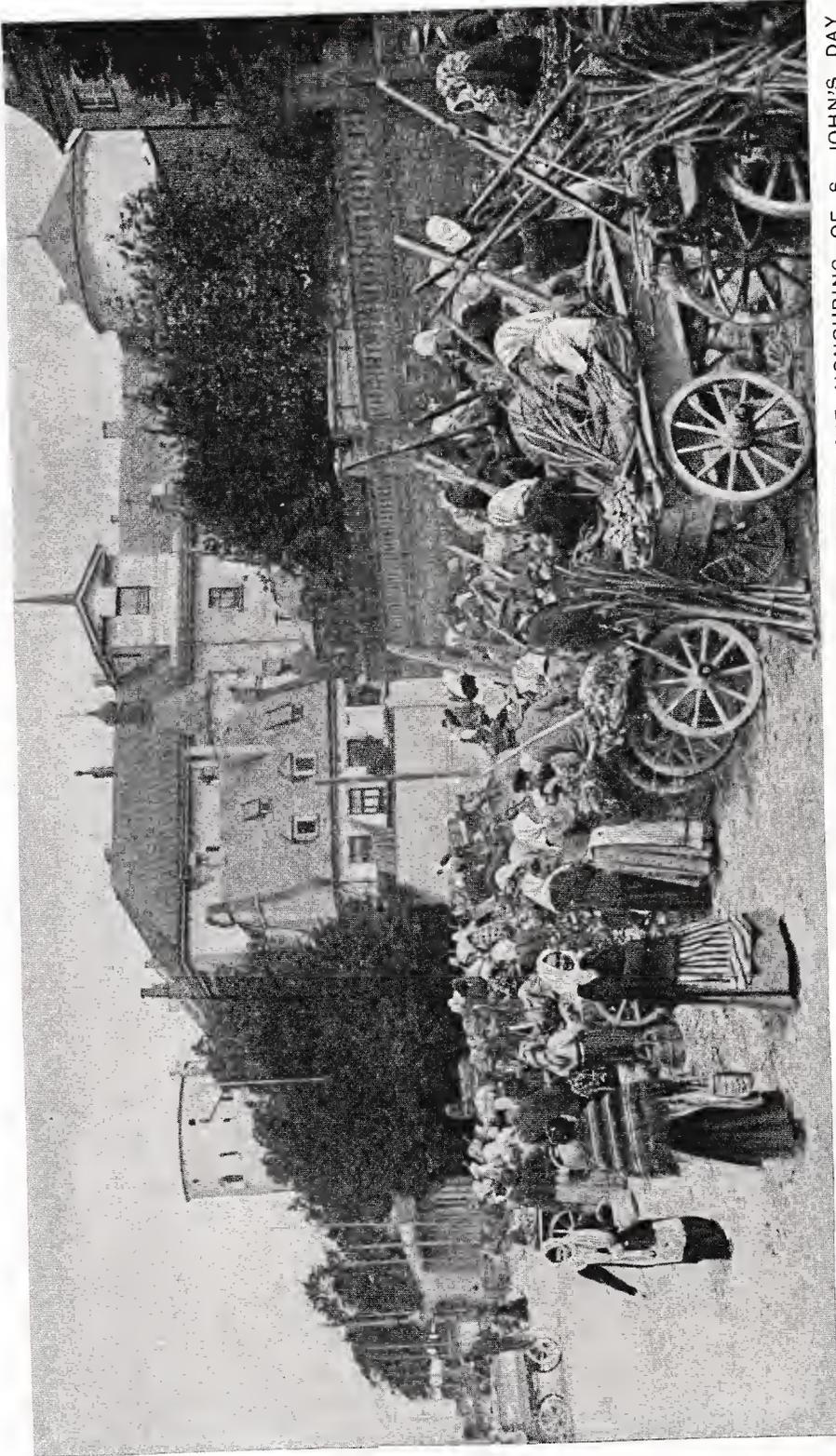


FAMOUS SONGSTRESS OF LATVIA

Thus charmingly clad in a variety of the national costume, this daughter of Latvia holds thousands spell-bound by the rich beauty of her soprano voice

Photo, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga

incessant complaint. They are to be compensated, but the compensation has not yet been fixed, and will not be high. The Letts consider, and with reason, that the barons should not feel hurt in thus bearing a share of the losses caused by the Great War. In comparison with the peasant who lost his solitary cow, his home, his all, the big landowner lost very little save his buildings and some of his cattle. The land remained. But if the government had not parcelled out the land, there can be no doubt whatever that Latvia would have become part of



**GATHERING OF COUNTRY CARTS CONTAINING GARLANDS AND DECORATIONS FOR THE HONOURING OF S. JOHN'S DAY**  
Large numbers of country conveyances laden with a profusion of foliage meet in various Latvian districts every 23rd of June to distribute their leafy loads among the populace who are intent on celebrating S. John's Day with all its time-honoured rites. In the country, particularly during S. John's Eve, the fun is fast and furious, and on the farm premises small barrels fixed to the ends of poles are filled with wood or tar and ignited, the flames illuminating the countryside and



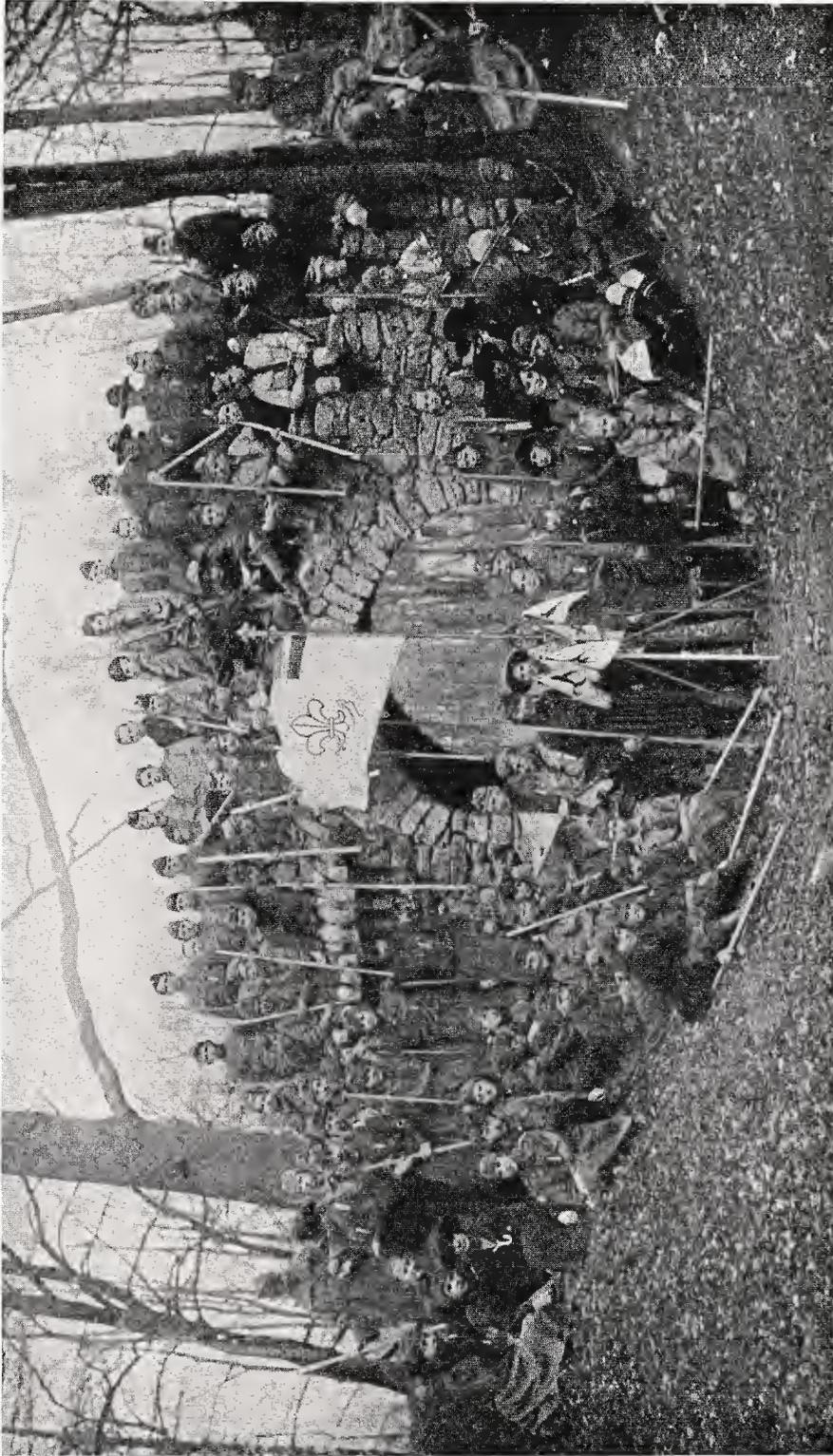
**IN PREPARATION FOR A POPULAR LATVIAN FESTIVAL: CUSTOMERS BUYING THE FAMOUS S. JOHN'S CHEESE**

These flat round cheeses, known as the S. John's Day Cheese, are made annually by the farmers' wives of Latvia to celebrate S. John's festival, which falls on June 24. During the preceding day large numbers of them are sold, at a very moderate figure, for the countryfolk delight in this old-world holiday and endeavour to observe all its varied tradition. After dusk has fallen on S. John's Eve the merry-making becomes universal, and the cheeses are gradually demolished in the interludes between the singing and dancing, continued until the early hours of the morning

*Photo, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga*

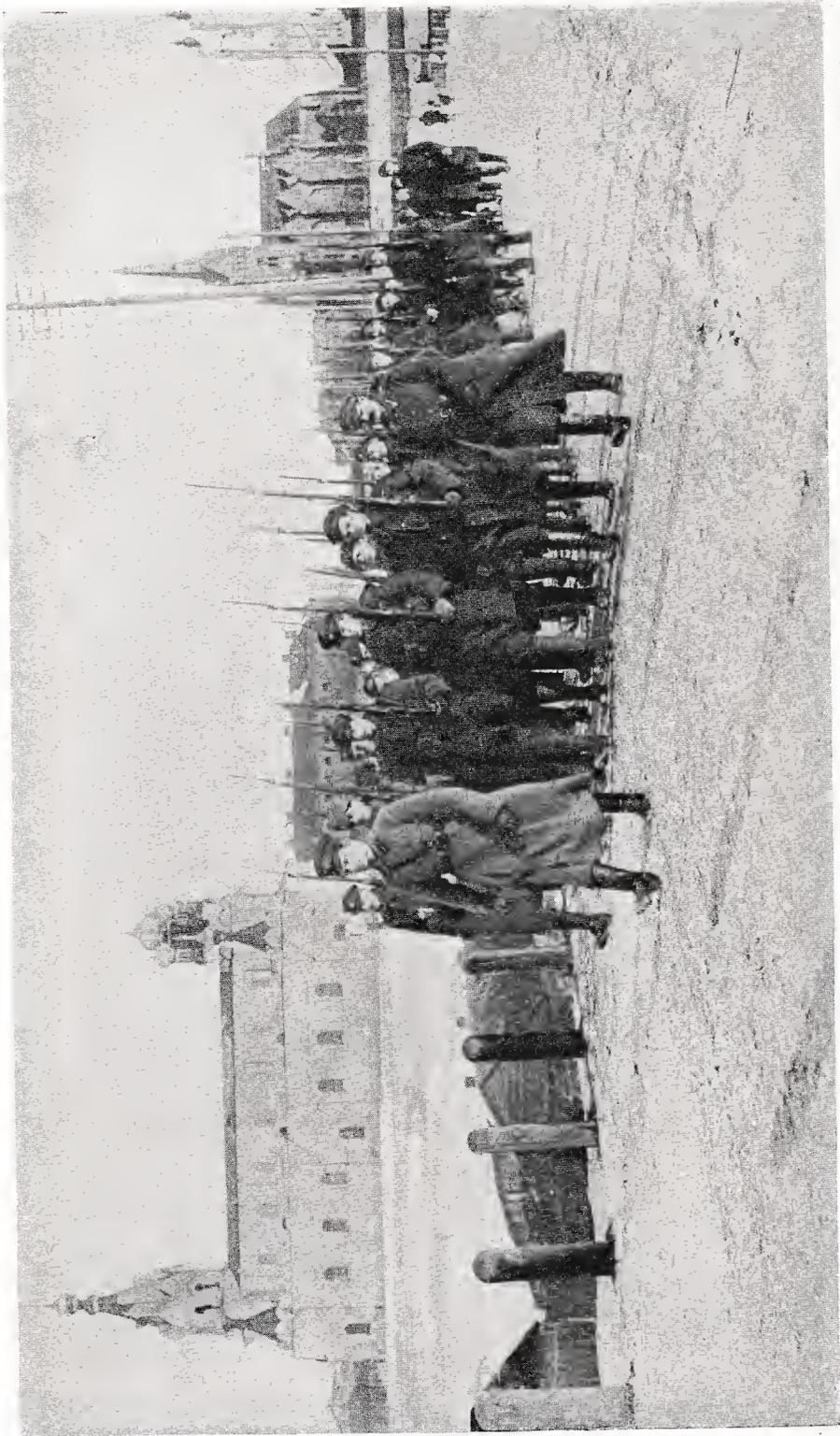


**LATVIAN MEMBERS OF A WORLD-WIDE BROTHERHOOD HOISTING THEIR COUNTRY'S FLAG IN A SCOUT CAMP**  
In 1908, on a small island off the coast of Dorsetshire, the Boy Scout movement came into being. Spreading rapidly, it made such remarkable progress that it is now firmly established in every civilized country throughout the world, irrespective of race, colour, or language. Several Lettish Scouts visited Great Britain in 1922, when the wonderful spirit of harmony manifested by the boyhood of twelve different nations surpassed that which had all were true to that clause of their Law which



**GATHERING OF LETTISH BOYS AND GIRLS ROUND THE LATVIAN FLAG OF THE LEAGUE OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH**  
The youth of Latvia made eager response to the Boy Scout and Girl Guide movements, and under the guiding influence of competent officers is being trained in the principles of unselfishness and goodwill to observe the great truth that to remove misunderstanding between individuals or nations one must appreciate "the other's point of view." It is with the rising generation that the hopes of humanity rest, for the boys and girls of to-day will develop into the men and women of to-morrow, and on them will depend the future peace and prosperity of the nations of the world

*Photo, Latvian Consulate General*

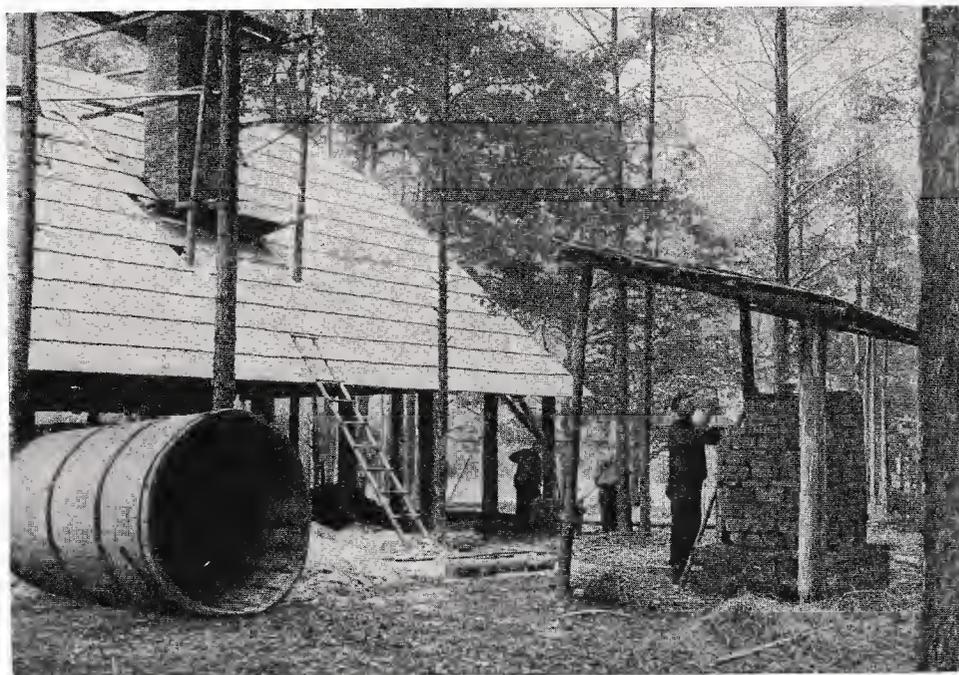


**SOME OF THE MEN OF THE LETTISH LIBERTY ARMY WHO WON THEIR FREEDOM WITH THEIR OWN HANDS**  
Latvia may well be proud of the fighting spirit of her sons, to whose indomitable courage she owes her deliverance from a sorry state of vassalage. The standing army consists of 20,000 Letts. They are a stalwart, intelligent body of men, all of them able to read and write. The Letts can certainly be classed as a highly literate nation, and among the Baltic peoples their excellent standard of education has for many years stood next in rank to that of the Finns



#### LAUNDRY DAY WITH THE LETTISH FARMER'S WIFE

The work is usually executed in the open air ; when no river is near pails of spring water supply her needs. The method of beating the wet linen, twisted into rolls, with wooden mallets would appear to be most effective, for the women's kerchiefs and aprons and the men's shirts always begin the week with a snowy whiteness that speaks well for the muscular zeal of the laundry-woman



#### EXPLOITING THE RESINOUS WOOD AND FOLIAGE OF THE PINE

The beautiful forests of Latvia play leading parts in many an industrial enterprise and produce certain species of pine which yield pitch, tar, and turpentine, and from which essential oils and spirit are distilled. Distillation was practised in Russia in ancient times, but the Alexandrians were among the first to acquire fame from the oil of turpentine which they prepared by distilling pine-resin

*Photos, Press Section, Latvian Foreign Office, Riga*



**GIRL PROMOTER OF INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISE**

Though most of the Letts are peasants, there are no illiterates among the adults of Lettish nationality; and this industrial worker is one of a large army of capable men and women who are helping to build up the economic life of Latvia

Soviet Russia, and the barons would have lost their all. The peasants absolutely demanded their share, and by acceding to this demand the Government kept out Bolshevism and, at the same time, saved part of the land for the barons.

Staunch and loyal to their national ideals through years of oppression, it is not surprising to find the Letts, now that they have secured their independence, a strictly conservative and

cautious folk. Wrapped up heart and soul in their country's welfare, and mindful of the long years of misery behind them, they are determined to protect Latvia from political friction and internal disputes calculated to undermine the national spirit and endanger their hard-won independence. "United we stand, divided we fall," they remind one another.

Under the careful rule of her conservative sons, Latvia is prospering, and although one of the oldest of European nations, she is thoroughly up to date. Her cultural, agricultural, industrial, and commercial life, so sadly disorganized by the war, is gradually righting itself, and proving in innumerable ways that Latvia may justly be classed as one of the most progressive countries in Europe—a fact that presents a striking testimonial to the recuperative powers of the State and the patriotism of the citizens.

Reticent by nature, the Lett wisely meets success without effusiveness or bravado. Memories of the past "heavy times," which have impressed their stamp of melancholy not only on the adults, but also on the growing generation, are still too fresh, and the blessings of peace have been his all too short a while that he should treat them casually. With a spirit of quiet, unobtrusive determination, he looks hopefully ahead; courageously basing his faith on the glorious motto: "I prefer the risks of liberty to the stillness of servitude."

*IN LOVELY LEBANON:  
Among the Druses of To-day*



*Despite his nondescript attire this fisherman makes an attractive figure as he uncoils his hand-net in the shallow water by the Lebanon coast*

Photo, the Rev. W. Ewing

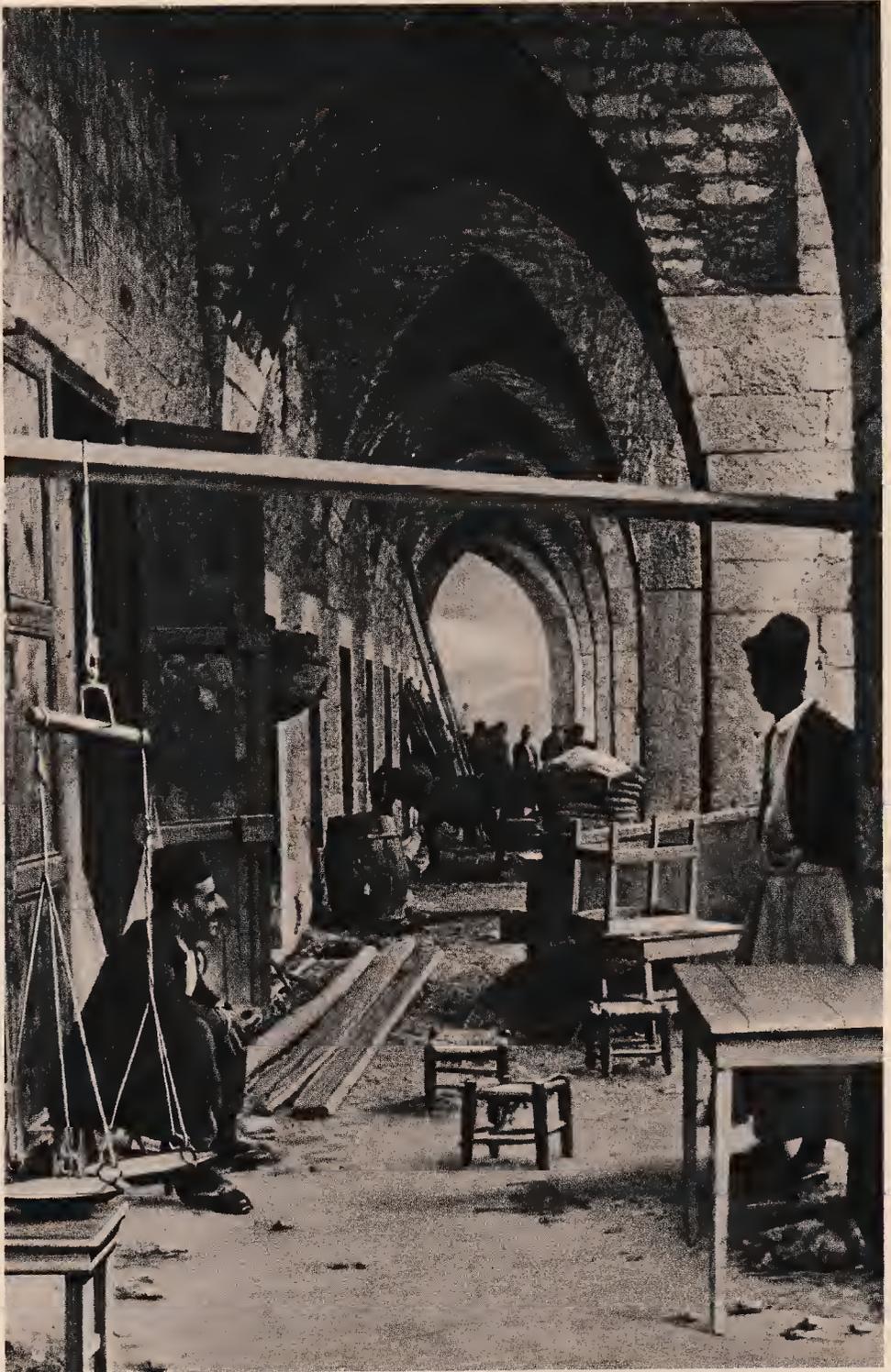


Coaxed like many another fat-tailed sheep in Lebanon to feed on mulberry leaves until too plump to walk, this useful animal is destined for its owner's table.



*While the "one ewe lamb" is being washed, there is a noticeable increase in the number of natives who engage in local gossip as they await an opportunity to replenish their empty pitchers at the old Lebanon village fountain*

Photo, the Rev. W. Ewing



*Stilled for the day under this fine vaulted roof is the bustle of Sarbà's bazaar, only to break out with renewed vigour on the morrow*

Photo, P. Martindale



*This gate forms a part of the house of a Druse Chief at Metain, which rears its strong stone head on the site of an old Crusader's castle*

Photo, Canon J. T. Parfit



*Not a touch of modern Western prose vitiates the Oriental romance of this Druse village tucked away in the heart of the Lebanon heights*

Photo, Canon J. T. Parfit



*Vagrants in the Lebanon, they haunt the bazaars, rich with manifold merchandise, where tinkling tunes attract attention and generosity*

Photo, P. Martindale



*The tall headdress now rarely figures in Druse feminine costume, but a young bride eagerly dons aught that is becoming to her girlish beauty*

Photo, Bouffis